GENDER AND VULNERABLE POPULATIONS INTEGRATION STRATEGY

REGIONAL GOVERNANCE ACTIVITY

Gender and Vulnerable Populations Integration Strategy

Regional Governance Activity

Management Systems International
Corporate Offices

200 12th Street, South
Arlington, VA 22202 USA

Tel: + 1 703 979 7100

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INTRODUCTION

As Colombia works towards negotiating a sustainable and inclusive peace, the USAID Regional Governance Activity (RGA) will help improve sub-national governance in 40 conflict-affected municipalities located within nine departments. RGA programming will contribute to Development Objective 1: "Effective presence of democratic institutions and processes in targeted areas" of the Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS). Specifically, it will align with:

Intermediate Result 1.1: Citizen-prioritized services more effectively delivered; and
Intermediate Result 1.2: Increased citizen participation in democratic processes and governance.

Historically, the Government of Colombia (GOC) has had limited reach and presence in remote and rural areas throughout the country, particularly in the 40 municipalities where RGA will operate. This lack of coverage and ability to deliver key services to its citizens has created an environment of distrust and skepticism. These sentiments have been exacerbated and complicated by the ongoing conflict. To promote inclusive development and meet RGA goals, MSI will work to mainstream gender and integrate vulnerable groups throughout the five components of RGA.

These five component areas are as follows:

Component 1: Improved Decentralization to Enhance Operational Capacity of Departmental and Local Governments
Component 2: Improved Financial Management and Performance of Targeted Municipalities
Component 3: Improved Normative, Institutional, and Procedural Frameworks for Development and Maintenance of Secondary and Tertiary Road Infrastructure
Component 4: Increased Citizen Participation for Enhanced Transparency and Accountability
Component 5: Improved Electoral Process to Limit State Capture at Sub-National Level

The districts and municipalities where RGA activities will take place are highlighted in the map below.

Figure 1: Map of RGA Districts and Municipalities
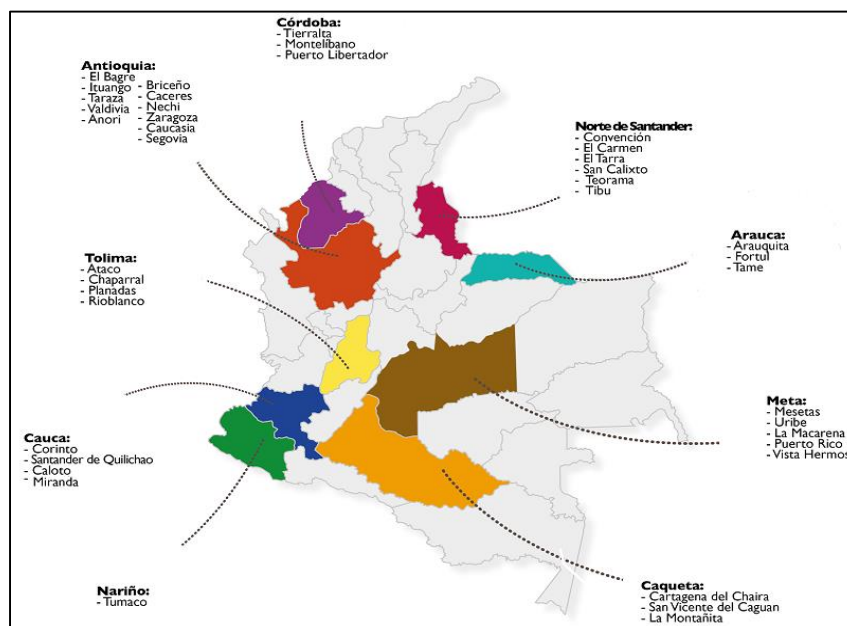
PURPOSE

This Gender and Vulnerable Populations Integration Strategy[1] was designed to enable national, departmental and municipal governments to provide better delivery of services to vulnerable populations, including women, indigenous peoples, youth, Afro-Colombians, the elderly, LGBTI, victims, and people with disabilities. It also intends to empower citizens (vulnerable populations in particular) to advocate for their needs and rights to sufficient services and to participate in the design of local strategies for the implementation of these services.

The strategy contributes to the overall purpose of RGA as its emphasis is on vulnerable populations and municipalities that have been disproportionally affected by the ongoing armed conflict in Colombia. The proposed activities will ensure sub-national government entities apply gender and vulnerable population lenses to their work, while simultaneously helping vulnerable populations by promoting their ability to advocate for effective service delivery and engage with their government counterparts. A major focus of the strategy is to ensure the needs of vulnerable populations are integrated into departmental and municipal development plans and this will be accomplished by working with sub-national entities and vulnerable populations to facilitate inclusive, participatory planning and design processes.

STRUCTURE OF THE STRATEGY

The strategy begins with a contextual overview of Colombia, specifically the nine departments and 40 municipalities RGA will focus its activities on. This background is followed by our overall approach to gender and vulnerable population integration. The strategy then highlights key stakeholders and offers background on our analytical framework. Following this, specific actions under each of RGA's five component areas are described. Our activities were designed to be harmonized and complementary and many touch subjects beyond one component. For the purpose of this strategy, we have organized our actions by component while recognizing that there are natural linkages between the components.

CONTEXT

Due to the intersection of several key events, it is a critical moment in time for Colombia – among these are the ongoing peace talks being brokered between the GOC and FARC, as well as the upcoming mayoral elections in October 2015. The results of these processes and the paths taken to get there will greatly shape the future well-being of Colombian citizens, especially the women and vulnerable groups that have historically been disproportionally affected by conflict.

Colombia's governance landscape has been powerfully shaped by issues of gender and vulnerable populations, including women, indigenous people, Afro-Colombians, youth and sexual minorities, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) individuals. Gender has been a structuring influence undergirding all interpersonal interactions, social institutions and individual and group identities. Colombia's conflict and pervasive violence – domestic, criminal, sexual – have impacted women and men in different ways and have devastated individuals, households and communities, particularly indigenous peoples, Afro-Colombians, elderly people, LGBTI individuals, people with

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[1] RGA will recognizes vulnerable people whose condition or situation are in a state of vulnerability or risk, because they have historically suffered discrimination , exclusion and inequality. These populations include women, youth, indigenous and Afro-Colombian , disabled , elderly people and the LGBTI population .

disabilities, youth and women. Historically, these groups have suffered discrimination, exclusion and inequality.

Even with enabling frameworks at the national level to ensure the inclusion of indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities within Colombia's social and political processes, implementation on the ground has been severely limited. The prevalence of armed conflict has led to a culture of violence, fear and intimidation. This places tremendous constraints on women's and vulnerable populations' ability to advocate for their needs within systems and structures of governance and limits the ability of local leaders to respond. This context prevents populations most in need of state services from accessing necessary resources and having their voices heard in governance processes.

Key issues facing women and vulnerable groups in Colombia include: access to resources, such as land and finances; access to services, such as health, education and transportation; political participation; violence; and access to justice. In general, women are more likely to be homebound than participate in the formal economy. In practice, this means they have less capital (financial and land ownership) and lack access to legal recourse to address these barriers and address situations of violence. The lack of representation of women, Afro-Colombians, LGBTI representatives, people with disabilities, and indigenous groups in government translates into a lack of policies and service delivery to meet their particular needs.

According to the Registry of Victims, there have been over 7.6 million victims of the conflict, of which half are women. At approximately 6.3 million (roughly 13% of the total population), Colombia has the second largest internally displaced population (IDP) in the world. Violent crime, particularly femicide, is endemic and Colombia has the second highest number of murdered women in Latin America. The Ministry of Health and Social Protection reported a total of 1,062,917 people with disabilities in 2013 (over half of those registered are women – 545,876).

The 40 municipalities of RGA intervention have historically suffered violence as a result of the presence of armed groups, paramilitaries, criminal gangs, drug traffickers and, recently, illegal mining. All 40 municipalities have low coverage and delivery of education, water and housing (though perhaps the most critical situations are in San Calixto, Teorama, La Macarena and Puerto Rico). Three municipalities – Tumaco, Tibú and Puerto Rico – cultivate almost one-fifth of the country's coca.

According to statistics from the National Planning Department (DNP), the demographic situation in the 40 RGA municipalities is as follows:

• Overall, approximately 61.2% of the population in these 40 municipalities is considered vulnerable;
• 780,776 citizens are women, representing 48.7% of the population;
• 320,161 citizens are Afro-Colombians, representing 20% of the population;
• 296,605 citizens have been victims of forced displacement, representing 18.5% of the population;
• 70,798 citizens are indigenous peoples, representing 4.4% of the population; and
• There are 75 indigenous reserves in the 40 municipalities (Arauca and Tumaco have the largest numbers, with 18 and 15, respectively).

Policy and Legal Environment

Despite the marginalization of women and vulnerable groups in political participation and access to resources and services, Colombia has an array of progressive laws and policies that promote gender equity, inclusion, rights of the elderly, LGBTI rights, rights of people with disabilities, prevent discrimination and support human rights. Such laws include: Law **1098**/2006 for the protection of children and adolescents, Law **1257**/2008 against gender violence and discrimination, Law 1448/2011 Victims conflict, Law **21**/1991 for the protection of indigenous peoples and the Black Communities Law **70**/1993. There is also Law **1618**/2013 (Disabilities Act) which aims to eliminate discrimination against

people with disabilities and ensure employment opportunities, Act **1251**/2008 protecting the rights of the elderly, and currently, in 2015, the Ministry of Interior is working on policies to protect the LGBTI population and the government allows joint adoption by same-sex couples and recognizes "third gender" on birth certificates.

The issue is not necessarily that laws and policies impede women and vulnerable groups, but that the laws designed to help them are not enforced. Access to justice is a challenge for vulnerable groups – good laws exist but they need to be implemented. Furthermore, laws and policies are not harmonized across different levels of government, and planning and coordination mechanisms leave much to be desired. A tremendous gap exists between what "should be," and what the reality is, especially in places where State institutions have been absent for so long. As such, changing the State's role and the legal reality is a challenge.

In addition to the lack of enforcement, many women and vulnerable groups lack awareness of their rights, benefits and protections. This factor, coupled with government actors' lack of capacity to communicate with their constituents about their rights, reinforces vulnerable groups' lack of trust and confidence in the public sector.

OVERALL APPROACH AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Our strategy is designed to maximize empowerment, participation, inclusion and government responsiveness. Our approach prioritizes the centrality of vulnerability and gender concerns to effective governance. Though the terms "vulnerable groups" and "vulnerable populations" are used throughout the strategy for brevity, RGA recognizes the unique perspectives and needs of Afro-Colombians, indigenous peoples, LGBTI individuals, elderly, people with disabilities, youth, women, victims and other groups. Our programming will be differentiated to meet the varying needs of distinct segments of the vulnerable population.

Given Colombia's history of conflict and the complex social and cultural context, it is not enough to focus solely on empowering vulnerable populations to participate in governance. To be successful, RGA programming must be comprehensive and work simultaneously from the bottom up and the top down to address the very real gender, ethnic and racial barriers to participation. The strengthening of the government's capacity to respond effectively to citizens' needs, especially at the local levels, will be complemented by the strengthening of citizens' capacity to advocate for their needs and to hold their government accountable to these needs.

When implementing any development intervention, there is a potential to inflict unintended harm. This strategy recognizes that its key targets – vulnerable populations – have been marginalized, excluded, and may not have had previous exposures to international donor-funded interventions, or to USAID in particular. To mitigate this potential for harm, RGA will employ the Do No Harm (DNH) framework to its activities (from design to implementation to evaluation). Using the DNH methodology, the overall aim of this strategy is to help increase the autonomy vulnerable populations and organizations representing them and to improve their awareness of and engagement in RGA activities seeking to ensure their needs are heard and fulfilled by the responsible government entities.

Our approach is comprehensive and is rooted in legal and policy changes, capacity building and support for civil society initiatives (Figure 2). We see each of these three elements as pieces of a puzzle; when all three pieces are in place and interlocked, RGA will be able to successfully and sustainably integrate vulnerable populations and gender considerations into its work. Our goal is to seamlessly integrate these considerations into every decision RGA makes, from hiring staff to implementing activities.

Policy and Legal Changes. RGA activities will analyze how effectively the policy and legal frameworks that protect the rights of women and vulnerable populations are being implemented. Based on this diagnosis, we will be able to propose adjustments and actions to improve the policy and legal environment, in terms of better serving women and vulnerable population, and having government actors that are more aware of their roles and responsibilities.

Capacity Building. Technical assistance through RGA will help strengthen the management capacities of municipal and departmental actors to serve their constituents, particularly those that are vulnerable.

Promoting Effective Participation through Support for Civil Society Initiatives. To complement capacity building among government actors, RGA will also build the capacity of civil society groups devoted to the rights of women and vulnerable populations so they can better identify and advocate their priorities to their government representatives.

Accordingly, the key guiding principles and features of our strategy include:

- Implementation of analytical and diagnostic tools to better understand and work within the diverse and complex environment in the 40 municipalities and 9 departments, with a regional focus;
- Combination of bottom-up and top-down approaches to enhance relationships between government actors and their constituents, particularly vulnerable populations;
- Engagement of GOC and civil society in RGA activities that emphasize inclusivity, in particular, inclusion in local government initiatives;
- Leveraging of existing legal and policy frameworks created to protect the rights of women and vulnerable populations;
- Enhancement of existing governmental and other resources, organizations and individuals already working to address the needs of women and vulnerable populations in Colombia; and
- Employment of a gender-sensitive and inclusive approach to RGA management and staffing structures.

These features will be explored in greater detail under the five RGA components.

STAFFING

Our strategy to mainstream gender and vulnerable group needs into RGA activities begins with our carefully selected core staff, many of whom have backgrounds and training in gender issues and vulnerable populations.

Maria Viviana Gaitan Garcia, RGA's Gender and Vulnerable Populations Integration Specialist, will head the program's work with gender and vulnerable population issues, closely coordinating with each Component Coordinator. She will provide gender trainings to staff to encourage consistent gender-sensitive programming that crosscuts all activities. We have and will prioritize hiring staff that have experience in managing gender issues and programming. All RGA component coordinators have previous gender and vulnerable population training and have professional experience in working with inclusion of vulnerable populations, either in USAID programs, GOC programs, or with other aid donors.

Inclusion of gender and vulnerable population needs and empowerment is a core part of their own scopes of work and responsibilities, it is not an isolated approach delegated to one person. It is integrated, across the board, in RGA technical staff competencies and functions.

Our hiring approach is non-discriminatory and will be as representative of the local population as possible. Our regional offices will reflect the diversity of Colombia´s gender and ethnic make-up, with

local staff hired to ensure a balanced approach to our teaming arrangements and our strategic commitments.

Figure 2: RGA's Approach to Integration of Gender and Vulnerable Populations

Component 1:
Improved Decentralization to Enhance Operational Capacity of Departmental and Local Government

Component 2:
Improved Financial Management and Performance of Targeted Municipalities

Component 5:
Improved Electoral Process to Limit State Capture at the Sub-National Level

Component 3:
Improved Normative, Institutional, and Procedural Frameworks for Development and Maintenance of Secondary and Tertiary Roads

Component 4:
Increased Citizen Participation for Enhanced Transparency and Accountability

Policy and Legal Changes

Capacity Building

Support for Civil Society Initiatives

Afro-Colombians
Elderly
Indigenous Groups
LGBTI
People with Disabilities
Victims
Women
Youth

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

The Gender and Vulnerable Populations Integration Strategy will engage many key stakeholders at several critical levels – national, departmental, municipal and civil society. Table 1 below highlights select stakeholders and areas of collaboration. These actors, along with others, will be described in greater detail in Components 1-5 sections.

Table 1: Key Stakeholders for Integration of Gender and Vulnerable Populations

Stakeholders	Opportunities for Collaboration
National Level	
The High Office of the Presidential Adviser on Equality for Women	• Methodologies and tools for gender mainstreaming in development plans. • Gender indicators for development plans. • Strategies for promoting gender equity within municipal governments. • Strengthening departmental Gender Offices. • Sharing information that allows us to improve care services by local governments.
Ministry of Interior (Afro-Colombian, San Andres and Palenqueros Communities Affairs Directorate and Indigenous, Roma and Minorities Affairs Directorate)	• Tools, methodologies and policies for inclusion of vulnerable populations in municipal and departmental development plans. • Reviewing information to help determine the state of service provision to Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities. • Sharing strategies that promote improved access to services in these communities. • Review information about the policy for the LGBTI population and share information with CSOs working on these issues.
UN Women	• Strengthening local governments and women's organizations in areas of advocacy and participation. • Trainings. • Sharing information and best practices for engaging women.
National Planning Department (Sub-Departments of Gender and Territorial Development)	• Reviewing policies and joint actions for gender equality, non-discrimination and preventing gender-based violence. • Sharing and prioritizing gender indicators, in compliance with the CONPES and the National Development Plan. • Jointly reviewing findings about bottlenecks in access to services. • Checking the settings of public policies taking into account inputs generated during the implementation of RGA. • Technical assistance to the process of certification of indigenous reserves, so they can autonomously operate SGP resources. • Technical assistance in the construction of a module for citizen participation in the index measuring Integral Municipal and Departmental Performance.
Ministry of Health and Social Protection	• Exchange information and strategies for dealing with gender violence • Share information and possible strategies for people with disabilities • Review GOC portfolio of services for the care of the disabled population.
Departmental Level	
Governors and Ministries of Health, Education, Participation, Social Development, Gender Offices and Secretariats for Gender and Vulnerable	• Coordinating actions between departments and municipalities to improve service and promote actions that benefit women and vulnerable populations. • Strengthening public administration and financial management to improve access to services.

Stakeholders	Opportunities for Collaboration
Populations	
Regional Ombudsmen and Regional Procuradurías	• Improving levels of coordination between the municipalities and their respective departments. • Capacity building training in monitoring procedures, to improve responses to cases involving GBV.
Immediate Reaction Unit (URI) of the Attorney General of the Nation	• Facilitation of joint processes and communication between the ombudsmen, Family Police and the URI for complaints presented by the victims of GBV.
Academy	• Coordinating education and training of women CSOs and vulnerable population with universities, research centers, National Learning Service (SENA).
Municipal Level	
Mayors and Ministries of Health, Education, Participation, Social Development, Gender Offices and Secretariats for Gender and Vulnerable Populations	• Strengthening the processes and procedures for the management of the municipality pubic inspection, surveillance and control of the municipalities to improve access to services for women and vulnerable populations. • Coordinating actions between the department and municipalities to improve service and promote actions that benefit women and vulnerable populations.
Family Police and Municipal Inspectors (Personerías)	• Update police stations and staff on the procedure for referring complaints to URI for the processing of the respective regional research and advocacy for monitoring in the context of protecting human rights.
Civil Society	
Civil Society Organizations	• Inventorying and mapping of CSOs working with gender and vulnerable population issues in target municipalities (identification of needs strengthening). • Trainings and technical assistance to local CSOs and vulnerable women on proposal development and project management. • Technical assistance for the formulation of oversight projects (roads, health, education, water, electricity). • Promoting and strengthening citizen and CSO participation to improve access to services.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Before designing interventions that aim to integrate vulnerable populations and women in a more effective way, RGA will investigate the key issues and priorities of these differentiated groups. Their realities will vary greatly throughout the nine departments and their municipalities.

Our approach to analyzing gender dynamics and vulnerable groups considers how governance might be radically different when approached in dialogue with the experiences of vulnerable populations. Our framework employs a gender and vulnerable population lens and will ask the "right" questions to gain insight into the specific service delivery needs and experiences of women and men.

Sample Analysis Questions

- What are traditional roles for men in your community? For women? Do these roles differ for indigenous peoples? For Afro-Colombians?
- Do men and women have equal access to resources (land, housing, healthcare, water, education)?
- What needs exist for increasing women's and vulnerable groups' access to and control of resources? What are the opportunities?
- Are your service delivery needs being met?
- Are men and women represented in senior level decision-making positions within your department?
- Are there senior level decision-makers in power that represent your group (indigenous, Afro-Colombian, etc.)?

Our framework will draw inspiration from USAID's Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Strategy, as well as the ADS 205: Integrating Gender Equality and Female Empowerment in USAID's Program Cycle and industry best practices, to focus on identifying cultural norms, beliefs and gender roles and how these vary by vulnerable population. We will illuminate relationships and how women and vulnerable groups engage with one another and with the government. We will also determine how assets and resources are distributed and controlled to discover the distinct barriers to participation and decision-making that each of these groups face.

Our analysis will be customized by department, allowing us to adapt to their demographics and environment. For example, in Cauca there is a large indigenous and Afro-Colombian population; in comparison, in Antioquia gender dynamics are front and center and there are not as many Afro-Colombians. Recognizing these distinctions allows us to more strategically identify programming needs.

COMPONENT 1

Component 1 activities focus on improving decentralization to enhance the capacity of departmental and municipal governments. RGA recognizes this component as particularly critical to the policy and legal change portion of our Gender and Vulnerable Populations Integration strategy. Our vision to better integrate gender and vulnerable populations in Component 1 is to work from the top-down by developing departmental and municipal authorities' capacity to consider and incorporate the service delivery needs and priorities of their vulnerable constituents, allowing for more open and transparent lines of communication and dialogue with these constituents. Working bottom-up, RGA will work with civil society groups on advocacy, proposal development and citizen oversight, though these actions will primarily fall under Components 2 and 4.

The first step towards improving decentralization is to discover barriers to decentralization among the 40 municipalities. Mapping and identification of decentralization challenges and areas for improvement will be carried out in the 40 municipalities and will include key questions regarding the perspectives and experiences of women, Afro-Colombians, youth, LGBTI, people with disabilities, indigenous communities and victims.

Complementing the mapping of decentralization challenges, mapping of competencies of the target departmental and municipal governments will take place. To streamline public administration and increase efficiency, it is important to understand the current state of capacities and skills. The competency mapping exercise will analyze policies and regulations at the varying government levels, including key laws benefiting vulnerable populations. Policy adjustment recommendations will be developed to improve the performance of local governments with regards to the most vulnerable populations; these will be communicated to local governments and to civil society stakeholders advocating for vulnerable groups.

To promote decentralization, coordination among the different levels of government is key. Many laws that protect the rights of vulnerable citizens are not implemented consistently or harmonized at the different levels of government. RGA will support forums and "town hall" meetings to provide opportunities for municipal and departmental government officials to form a dialogue with their vulnerable constituents.

In addition to work under Component 1, opportunities for RGA to leverage the current political and legal framework exist in each component, particularly in Components 2 and 4. To improve the overall policy and legal environment for vulnerable populations, this strategy also proposes a series of activities centered around seven key laws that benefit vulnerable groups outlined in Table 2.
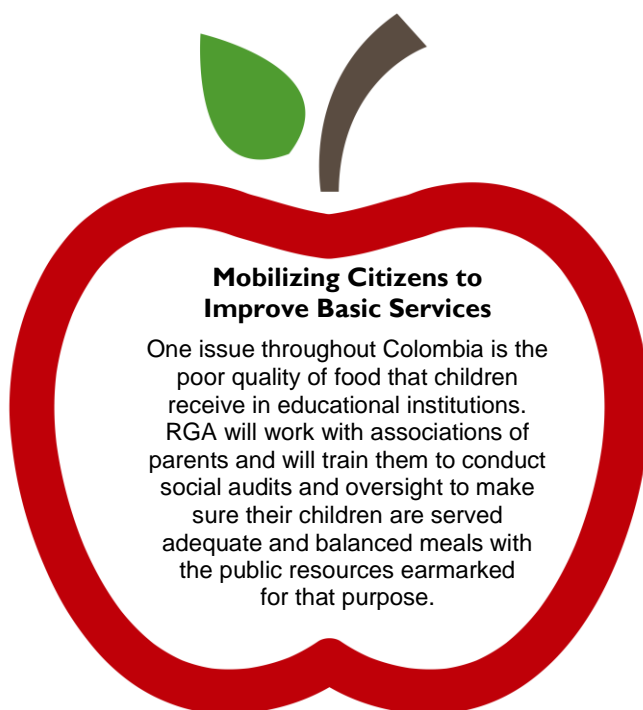
Table 2: Leveraging Existing Political and Legal Frameworks to Benefit Vulnerable Groups

Political/Legal Framework	Opportunities for RGA
Law 1257/2008 **Right of Women to Live Free From Violence**	• Facilitate the formation of a women's CSO network with a mission to serve as a safety net for those reporting incidences of GBV. • Promote mainstreaming of the law by hosting coordination meetings within RGA municipalities for stakeholders including ombudsmen, police, and healthcare providers. • Support RGA municipal authorities and health departments to update the census of women in the Sisben (System Identification of Potential Beneficiaries of Social Programs), prioritizing their affiliation and identity cards. • Support RGA municipalities to include women and vulnerable groups in Committees for Community Participation (COPACOS).
1098/2006 Protection of Children and Adolescents	• Work with RGA departments and municipal mayors on development plans and resource allocation, training them to prioritize, include and differentiate the needs of youth (including minority youth groups), especially in education. • Offer support to RGA municipalities to prioritize transport resources and school feeding programs for girls, Afro-Colombian and indigenous youth. • Provide support to RGA mayors and governors to promote campaigns to prevent violence and discrimination in the classroom and school environment. • Train RGA CSOs to monitor and advocate for appropriate education service delivery.
70/1993 Protection of Afro-Colombian Communities	• Strengthen capacities of Afro-Colombian community councils in RGA municipalities for effective participation in the municipal governance processes, especially municipal planning, so that their service delivery needs and priorities are taken into account. • Deliver training on proposal development to enable Afro-Colombian communities in RGA municipalities within reserves to submit project concepts to the SRG for financing. • Provide training to Afro-Colombian community councils in RGA municipalities in project management, financial management/fund administration and advocacy.
Protection of Indigenous Communities (granted under 1991 Constitution) **715/2001 System of Participation**	• Strengthen capacity of indigenous associations and those CSOs focused on indigenous rights to participate in municipal planning activities and lobby for their distinct priorities. • Provide technical assistance to DNP to support the process of certification of indigenous stewardship, and to allocate resources from SGP that can be administered autonomously by the indigenous communities. • Provide training on resource management for indigenous councils in RGA municipalities to better manage SGP resources. • Deliver training on proposal development to enable indigenous communities within reserves in RGA municipalities to submit project concepts to the General System of Royalties (SRG) for financing, with special focus on the development of projects that benefit indigenous youth and women.
1448/2011	• Work with health departments and service providers within the RGA municipalities

Political/Legal Framework	Opportunities for RGA
Protection of Victims of Conflict	to sensitize them to the proper care for victims. • Work with CSOs to raise awareness of the rights of victims protected under the law through community or municipal campaigns.
1618/2013 Disabilities Act	• Establish measures of rehabilitation care, social protection and labor for the disabled population. • Strengthen the plan of care for people with disabilities (involving care of family and caregivers) • Establish roles and responsibilities in health and education.
1251/2008 Protection of the rights of the elderly	• Establish institutional responsibilities for the protection of the elderly, especially for the Ministry of Health • Review performance criteria for homes for the elderly

COMPONENT 2

Actions under Component 2 are designed to improve the financial management performance of the 40 RGA municipalities. The lack of government-provided services throughout Colombia and in our target 40 municipalities can be partially explained by a low capacity of public authorities to prioritize and coordinate actions that are geared to benefit vulnerable populations. A lack of financial management, communication and outreach skills also adds to this gap. To better serve their constituents and manage resources more efficiently, municipal government actors must be aware of their citizens' distinct priorities and needs.

Mobilizing Citizens to Improve Basic Services

One issue throughout Colombia is the poor quality of food that children receive in educational institutions. RGA will work with associations of parents and will train them to conduct social audits and oversight to make sure their children are served adequate and balanced meals with the public resources earmarked for that purpose.

RGA will build local government capacity through trainings in areas of strategic communications, project planning, financial resource allocation and management (including gender-sensitive budgeting), project design, delivery, monitoring, and other project management fundamentals. This capacity building effort will address gender-based needs and emphasize the need to promote and nurture inclusion. Government actors will be sensitized to the fact that inclusion leads to better development and service delivery outcomes, which in turn, promotes their political reputations.

These trainings will not only build and reinforce essential skills for government actors to be able to incorporate gender and vulnerable needs into their work, but will also serve as a foundation for them to be able to liaise with and train their constituents. As their skills and competencies in key areas are increased, so will the knowledge and understanding of their roles and responsibilities to the people. Activities under this and other RGA

components will complement this top-down effort by training constituents and members of civil society to participate in the formulation of Development Plans, monitor service deliver outcomes, conduct social audits, and advocate for their rights, in order to help keep their governments honest, efficient and accountable. RGA will support indigenous councils to better manage their SGP resources and to develop plans and programs that benefit them.

Given the change in government that will take place after this October's elections, RGA has a prime opportunity to work with the successful candidates in integrating gender and vulnerable group needs into the mayoral Development Plans.

Between January and May 2016, all new Governors and Mayors must prepare their respective Municipal or Departmental Development Plans. RGA will facilitate the inclusion of gender and vulnerable group perspectives (indigenous, Afro-Colombian, youth, people with disabilities, women, LGBTI) into these planning tools. Since the Plans become official roadmaps (with corresponding budgets) for four years, it is the best and most important chance to integrate the priorities of these vulnerable groups.

In facilitated dialogues and coordination between the outgoing government and newly elected leaders (governors and mayors) and Gender Offices and civil society, RGA will verify the status of the barriers and successes women and vulnerable groups have experienced regarding the availability and suitability of basic services in the 9 departments and 40 municipalities. The results of these exercises will inform

subsequent RGA's formulation of targeted and customized action plans for governments to reduce obstacles and improve service delivery to vulnerable groups. These results, coupled with the capacity building efforts, will culminate in the ability to develop Departmental and Municipal Development Plans that promote gender equity and include priorities of vulnerable groups including women, youth, LGBTI, people with disabilities, the elderly, Afro-Colombians, and indigenous groups.

> **Using Existing Resources to Empower Women**
>
> The Women's Network of Northern Cauca has a community radio station, and RGA plans to strengthen collective communication through radio programs to facilitate discussions on the main issues arising with the provision of public services (such as water, education, health) in municipalities. The conversations will emphasize the access to vulnerable populations and public officials will be invited to host forums to hear about and be able to address service delivery issues.

COMPONENT 3

Activities under Component 3 aim to improve frameworks for the development and maintenance of secondary and tertiary road infrastructures. The integration of women's and vulnerable groups' issues in these frameworks is critical, as they have different perspectives and needs. For example, women may call for greater lighting in secondary and tertiary roads as this can result in more safety and less crime.

Our strategy calls for women and vulnerable groups to participate in road planning consultations and for their needs to be addressed in Council of National Economic and Social Policy (CONPES) documents. The idea is to have communities conduct oversight and manage resources for these road projects – and when women and vulnerable groups are involved in every step of the way, their needs will be incorporated.

RGA will inventory community organizations, women's groups, Afro-Colombian and indigenous groups in areas where road development and maintenance will be performed so that they can be called upon to participate and offer their recommendations.

The RGA team will work with the DNP to agree on a strategy and policy document (CONPES). The document will incorporate the prioritization of road projects that benefit youth, women, Afro-Colombian

and indigenous communities via a list of criteria and scoring system that allocates additional points to projects intended to serve vulnerable groups. These guidelines for prioritization criteria will be integrated into manuals, to help mainstream gender and vulnerable group concerns.

Another substantive way to integrate vulnerable groups into this component is to allow them to participate in the construction, monitoring, and maintenance of secondary and tertiary roads through community councils.

COMPONENT 4

Opportunities for vulnerable groups to champion their priorities will increase as local government capacities to plan for inclusivity and manage resources improve. Under Component 4, RGA will assist vulnerable groups (women, Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities, LGBTI populations, youth, and people with disabilities) to ensure they have access that allows them to participate in governance processes and the capacity to encourage transparency and accountability.

Accordingly, RGA will work with civil society (with special attention on women's associations, Afro-Colombian groups (such as community councils or *consejos comunitarios*), youth associations, indigenous groups, organizations representing LGBTI populations, and groups supporting people with disabilities, to help them articulate their needs and concerns and communicate them to their government representatives. These efforts will include trainings in the project design and implementation cycle and will be linked to training in project oversight (see below). With technical assistance and trainings, these vulnerable groups will be able to carry out social controls in public administration, follow up on investment plans and public expenditures to make sure public funds are being used appropriately and as budgeted. The capacity building effort will use a comprehensive approach, incorporating the public administration cycle, from planning, to hiring, through implementation and follow-up actions.

Engaging Youth in Cauca and Tumaco

RGA will coordinate with Afro-Colombian organizations such as Familia Ayara and Recompas (a network of community councils in Tumaco) to engage young Afro-Colombian women and men in citizen monitoring and transparency initiatives though creative ways including hip-hop and capoeira. Family Ayara uses these Methods to engage youth in dialogues and reflections on their rights and political engagement.

Whenever possible, RGA will work with established organizations that advocate for vulnerable populations' rights in the target departments and municipalities, such as the Association of Women of Caucasia (ASOMUCA) or the Association of Women of Nechí (ASMUNE) or representatives of the LGBTI population in Chaparral in Tolima. We will strengthen their capacities to

participate in governance processes and encourage a "peer-to-peer" learning structure where these established organizations can serve as models to other less-established or nascent organizations.

Our team will coordinate with the National Learning Service (SENA) to train citizens to understand and learn about governance, municipal service delivery responsibilities and resources, opportunities for participation and how to promote transparency and accountability though service delivery monitoring and investment tracking. The training process will emphasize the participation of women, youth, LGBTI, people with disabilities, and ethnic populations, providing incentives for participation such as subsidized transport and learning materials to reduce barriers to participation.

RGA will develop a framework to enable vulnerable citizens and CSOs to participate in the preparation of Departmental and Municipal Development Plans. We will also develop gender and vulnerable population indicators that will allow citizens to track how well their priorities are being addressed.

Our activities will include trainings for departmental and municipal officials in participatory methodologies, enabling them to create their Development Plans in an inclusive manner, with involvement from their constituents, and with a gender and vulnerable population lens. Once these trainings are completed, RGA will support participatory planning workshops in each target municipality in order to develop the Municipal Development Plans. These workshops will guarantee the participation of vulnerable groups.

To bolster the capacity of citizens to demand transparency and accountability from their government officials, RGA will implement a social oversight audit model *"Hagamos Control Ciudadano"* (HCC). HCC has been successfully implemented in 29 municipalities under the USAID CIMIENTOS Program and eight municipalities under the USAID Royalties Management Program; it will be scaled up to other RGA municipalities. RGA will aid civil society efforts (especially CSOs working representing the needs of vulnerable populations) to develop departmental and regional networks of social auditors with trainings and exchanges of lessons learned and best practices.

COMPONENT 5

The promotion of free and transparent voting in Colombia critical. Widespread corruption in electoral processes demoralizes voters and encourages them to believe their votes have little power or influence. In Colombia, this corruption is a huge problem that is rarely prosecuted. This is due to low institutional capacity to monitor election results and the fact that citizens seldom report electoral crimes. This underreporting may be because citizens are not aware of how to report crimes and, in general, the country's classification of crimes is complex. Irregular voter registration (*trashumancia*) is one of the most prominent election crimes.

In order to promote changes in the regulatory framework for electoral campaign finance issues, administration of the electoral process and strengthening of electoral powers of national, regional and local institutions, RGA will develop a proposal to encourage electoral participation of women and vulnerable populations. Part of the proposal will include identifying potential obstacles faced while exercising their right to vote (working through local CSOs that are dedicated to representing these various groups). Upon identification of the obstacles, RGA will help local CSOs develop strategies to overcome them and to better engage vulnerable citizens and government entities, sensitizing them to the issues vulnerable groups face when trying to vote or even run for office.

RGA's objective is to promote coordination between key GOC institutions so they can be more effective in preventing electoral crimes, thus increasing the legitimacy and credibility of the electoral process. To facilitate this process, RGA will increase their capacity to respond to citizen complaints by collaborating

with Central Command Units (PMUs), URIEL and the Commission for Coordination and Follow-up of Electoral Processes to help them jointly develop and implement a strategy for raising citizen awareness for how to report electoral crimes to URIEL. RGA will work to ensure the strategy is gender-sensitive and that it takes the different perspectives and experiences of women and vulnerable groups into account. Traditionally marginalized groups will likely need deeper and more persuasive outreach to feel comfortable engaging with their governments, particularly with sensitive matters such as the reporting of crimes. RGA will also focus on strengthening CSOs that are involved with issues of democratic participation, elections and dealing with electoral offenses.

SUMMARY

As described throughout our Gender and Vulnerable Populations Strategy, the RGA teams views the mainstreaming of gender and vulnerable population considerations as a critical factor for successful and sustainable programming. Our philosophy and efforts center on the fact that these are not standalone efforts, but that gender and vulnerable group perspectives will be embedded throughout every activity.

RGA Programming

Gender and Vulnerable Populations Integration

IMPLEMENTATION
Providing technical assistance and capacity development support.

IDENTIFICATION
Recognizing key stakeholders and gender champions in government and civil society.

ANALYSIS
Verifying on-the-ground realities of vulnerable populations in target locations.

TEAMWORK
Recruiting an excellent RGA team committed to gender equity.

Figure 3: Key steps to integrating gender and vulnerable populations into RGA activities.